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Abstract

The article presents the experience of the Republic of Tatarstan in the field of preservation of cultural heritage sites, and their inclusion in UNESCO World Heritage List. The Republic has gained a positive experience of long-term cooperation with international organizations, including UNESCO, in the field of preservation of cultural heritage. The authors provide a description of the process and stages of inclusion of three archaeological and historical architectural complexes in the World Heritage List, namely the Kazan Kremlin, Bolgar Settlement, and Assumption Cathedral and monastery of the Island Town of Sviyazhsk.

Keywords: Republic of Tatarstan, the Kazan Kremlin, Bolgar settlement, Assumption Cathedral and monastery of Sviyazhsk, cultural heritage, UNESCO, archaeology.

Introduction

A special role among the numerous factors and living conditions of people throughout their history is played by natural and cultural heritage. Based on the current trends in the development of nature and society, one can assume that the significance of heritage for the fates of civilization will be not only important, but even decisive.

The UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, which was adopted in 1972 and came into effect in 1975, has proven itself as a unique international tool for identification and preservation of natural and man-made assets of outstanding universal significance. For over forty years, it has remained one of the most efficient international legal mechanisms in the field of heritage.

Modern strategic cultural projects are originally tested in the Republic of Tatarstan, for instance, the Kazan-Hermitage project, which initiated the interaction of regional museums with the largest art museum in Russia. A developed network of museums-reserves has been formed, which includes the key cultural heritage sites of the Republic.

It should also be noted that the Republic of Tatarstan has acquired a positive experience of long-term cooperation with international organizations in the field of preserving cultural heritage, rapprochement of cultures, inter-cultural and inter-confessional dialogue. A special place in this interaction belongs to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Out of the 28 sites of the Russian Federation included in the UNESCO World Heritage List, three are located in the Republic of Tatarstan (the Kazan Kremlin Historical and Architectural Complex, the Bolgar Historical and Archaeological Complex and the Assumption Cathedral and monastery of the Island Town of Sviyazhsk) (*Fig. 1*).

An important milestone in the cooperation with UNESCO was the inclusion of the architectural and historical complex of the Kazan Kremlin into the World Heritage List in 2000.

The Kazan Kremlin is the “heart” of Kazan. It is located in the centre of the city, on a cape of a high terrace on the left bank of the Kazanka River (*Fig. 2*). The territory of the Kremlin represents an irregular polygon in plan, stretched from north to south, which is accounted for by the local terrain.

The Kazan Kremlin is a unique complex of archaeological, historical and architectural monuments which have emerged and operated since the foundation of the town in the 11th century until the present day. The complex is based on a medieval fortress (*Fig. 3*) with an inner space having a regular layout and accommodating 16th–19th century buildings with revealed archaeological fragments of fortifications and structures of the 10th–16th centuries. In addition, the Kazan Kremlin is an archaeological site with a unique cultural layer reflecting the five development stages of the Kremlin complex. The total thickness of the cultural layer is up to 3–8m¹.

The inclusion of the Kremlin in the list of outstanding cultural and natural assets constituting the common heritage of all mankind in 2000 also established a greater responsibility for its preservation. The key point in ensuring the preservation of the Kazan Kremlin is the fulfilment of the requirements for the inalterability of its appearance and the preservation of the surrounding historical environment.

Improvement and restoration of existing walls, towers and buildings (*Fig. 4*) in the territory of the Kremlin are conducted in strict adherence to documentation approved by cultural heritage protection authorities. The UNESCO Chair in the Kazan Kremlin provides methodological support in the field of ensuring compliance with the established requirements. These activities allow preserving the Kazan Kremlin’s status of a unique monument of world significance².

¹ A.G. Sitdikov, *Kazan Kremlin: Historical and Archaeological Research*. Kazan, 2006, 39f.

² R.M. Valeev, *Historical and Cultural Heritage of the Republic of Tatarstan*, Kazan, 2007, 217.



Fig. 1. Map of UNESCO World Heritage Sites in the territory of the Republic of Tatarstan.

The diverse experience acquired during the reconstruction of the Kazan Kremlin, especially in the field of restoration of historical and spiritual assets of Muslims and Orthodox Christians – the Kul Sharif Mosque and the Annunciation Cathedral – has provided all prerequisites for the arrangement of a system of interaction between republican, federal and international organizations aimed at inclusion of Bolgar and Sviyazhsk in the World Cultural and Natural Heritage List.

The ‘World Heritage Site – Bolgar Historical and Archaeological Complex’ is a unique and authentic evidence of historical continuity and cultural diversity, as well as a sacred place for Muslims (*Fig. 5*), as it represents a symbol of the adoption of Islam in 922³.

Bolgar settlement is a multi-layer archaeological site. It is located in the Spassky District of the Republic of Tatarstan on the left bank of the Volga River 30 km downstream of the Kama mouth. The primary historical Bolgar town existed from the 7th to the 15th centuries, and in the 13th century it became the first capital of the Golden Horde (*Fig. 6*). It this period the town prospered, and its dimensions and significance increased. Later, during the Kazan Khanate period, it remained an important trade centre⁴.

³ R.M., Valeev, A.G. Sitdikov, R.R. Khairutdinov, S.G. Persova *et al.*, *Assumption Cathedral of the Island Town of Sviyazhsk in World Cultural Heritage*. Vol. 1. Kazan, 2016, 21.

⁴ A.G. Sitdikov, I.L. Izmailov, *Bolgar Town in Culture and History*. In: A.G. Sitdikov (ed.), *Great Bolgar*, Kazan, 2013, 16–29.

Bolgar is a recognized international centre of competence in the field of archaeological studies, preservation and sustainable management of heritage⁵ (Fig. 7). The site has a great research potential. Presently, archaeological excavations have only been conducted on 5% of the area⁶.

The Assumption Cathedral is located in the territory of the Island Town of Sviyazhsk (Fig. 8), 30 km west of Kazan, and represents a part of the Assumption Monastery ensemble, consisting of seven stone buildings of the 16th–19th centuries dating back to various time periods. The unique location of Sviyazhsk within the system of the Great Silk and Great Volga Routes in the geometric centre of the Volga river indicates the special role and significance of the Assumption Cathedral and monastery as a major cultural, economic, missionary, administrative and military centre of the region⁷.

The interior of the Assumption Cathedral has preserved the complete cycle of wall mural painting of the second half of 16th–early 17th centuries, featuring an area of 1080 square meters, an iconostasis with 16th–17th century icons, and the only image of Ivan the Terrible⁸.

The Assumption Cathedral represents an evidence of historical continuity and cultural diversity (Fig. 9). Considering the location and geopolitical conditions of the appearance of the Assumption Cathedral in the Turkic-Tatar and Finno-Ugric environment, it can be said that the concept of the Cathedral is a unique confirmation of the interaction of Christian Orthodox and Muslim cultures, which reflected in the diversity of architectural and pictorial forms⁹.

The location of the Cathedral is the north-western point in terms of the spread of Islam, and the south-eastern point of propagation of the architectural and artistic style of Pskov, Novgorod and Moscow. The Assumption Cathedral is an evidence of drastic historical and geopolitical changes in Eurasia, which played a key role in the formation of the multinational Russian state and had a fundamental influence on the historical fates of peoples from the Volga-Urals, Siberia and Central Asia, the spread of Orthodox Christianity to the East and the disappearance of post-Golden Horde Islamic states – Kazan, Astrakhan, Siberian, Nogai, and Crimean khanates. An authentic cultural lay-

⁵ Sitdikov, A.G., R.R. Khairutdinov, R.Z. Makhmutov, Establishment of Bolgar Museum-Reserve. In: A.G. Sitdikov (ed.), *Great Bolgar*, Kazan, 2013, 360–362.

⁶ Valeev, R.M., B. Rudolff, A.G. Sitdikov, R.R. Khairutdinov et al., *Bolgar Historical and Archaeological Complex. Vol. 2. Management of World Cultural and Natural Heritage Sites: Bolgar Historical and Archaeological Complex. Cultural Landscape of Bolgar Historical and Archaeological Complex* (with appendices), Kazan, 2016, 20.

⁷ Valeev et al., *Assumption Cathedral...*, 15.

⁸ Valeev et al., *Bolgar Historical...*, 22–47.

⁹ Valeev et al., *Bolgar Historical...*, 116.

er has preserved in and around the site, which contains artefacts of the 16th and 19th centuries¹⁰.

A special place in the implementation of measures for the preservation of the world cultural heritage of the region belongs to the Comprehensive Project “Cultural Heritage – Island-Town of Sviyazhsk and Ancient Bolgar”. One of the components of its implementation was the inclusion of the Bolgar Historical and Archaeological Complex and the Assumption Cathedral and monastery of Sviyazhsk in the UNESCO World Cultural and Natural Heritage List.

The integrated project “Cultural heritage — the Island Town of Sviyazhsk and ancient Bolgar” was implemented with the support of the Government of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Tatarstan in 2010–2018. Its primary focus was the study, preservation and museumification of the two outstanding historical, architectural, archaeological and landscape complexes located in the region¹¹.

The complex project has allowed to solve the following multiple-aspect social and cultural tasks related to the preservation and restoration of cultural heritage sites; conduct of comprehensive scientific studies of monuments and development of new technologies and methods for their study and conservation (including innovative non-destructive research methods); identification of previously unknown archaeological sites; establishment of new unique museum sites and forms of museum activities; development of an engineering and transport infrastructure for Bolgar and Sviyazhsk; creation and development of scientific and educational centres on the basis of museum-reserves; relocation of citizens from dilapidated housing; creation of new jobs and development of the service sector, as well as the increase of tourist and pilgrim flows.

It should be noted that the program of restoration activities was the first large-scale comprehensive inter-disciplinary project in the history of preservation, restoration and study of Sviyazhsk and Bolgar, with its objectives being a comprehensive scientific study of the cultural heritage of historical territories, establishment of an information system for processing and storage of study results, development of mechanisms for preservation of the authenticity and integrity of cultural heritage sites, cultural and natural landscapes, and regeneration of the historical environment.

Comprehensive interdisciplinary studies of the sites in Bolgar and Sviyazhsk with the participation of the leading research centres in Russia and foreign countries has allowed to acquire new knowledge about their past and make the new

¹⁰ Valeev *et al.*, *Assumption Cathedral...*, 117–120.

¹¹ R.R. Salikhov, A.G. Sitdikov, Bolgar Town: Spiritual and Cultural Renaissance. In: A.G. Sitdikov (ed.), *Great Bolgar*, Kazan, 2013, 284.

facts about their history known to general public. The activities were based on the “Program of complex scientific studies of the Assumption Cathedral, Trinity Church and the cultural heritage of Sviyazhsk” and the program “Study and popularization of the historical and cultural heritage of the Bolgar Historical and Archaeological Complex”. The collections of both museums have been replenished with tens of thousands of museum depository items. Over ten newly discovered stone buildings of the Golden Horde period have been museumified in the territory of Bolgar settlement. An intermediate result of the activities was a release of multi-volume publications dedicated to Bolgar¹².

A complex of medieval wooden residential buildings preserved in a moist cultural layer was studied during archaeological works in Sviyazhsk¹³. A scientific study of wood with a unique preservation degree provides new information on the urban planning culture, building traditions and technologies and medieval household life. Conservation methods were developed concurrently with the discovery and study of the sites. A unique museum of the archaeological wood “Tatarskaya Slobodka” was established, which has no counterparts in Russia¹⁴.

The Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage stipulates that the responsibility for the preservation and use of World Heritage Sites is borne by the parties to the Convention. The most important task in this respect is efficient management aimed at increasing of the existing potential and establishment of new possibilities for heritage sites. Management of a cultural heritage site is a complex activity aimed at the preservation of the site and its territory, coordination and interaction with all the local governmental, municipal, economic, technological and social organizations, as well as with the scientific and professional community.

Management plans for Bolgar Historical and Archaeological Complex¹⁵ and the Assumption Cathedral and monastery in Sviyazhsk have been approved by decision of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee¹⁶. Today, they are the first of the 28 sites included in the World Natural and Cultural Heritage List in the territory of the Russian Federation with an internationally approved manage-

¹² Valeev, R.M., A.G. Sitdikov, R.R. Khairutdinov, *Bolgar Historical and Archaeological Complex. Vol. 1. Bolgar – UNESCO World Heritage Site*. Kazan, 2016; Valeev et al., *Bolgar Historical...*; Valeev et al., *Assumption Cathedral Cathedral of the Island Town of Sviyazhsk...*; Valeev et al., *Assumption Cathedral...*

¹³ A.G. Sitdikov, A.S. Starkov, M.I. Fedulov, Sviyazhsk. In: *Archaeological studies of 2014: Bolgar and Sviyazhsk*, 2015, 32f.

¹⁴ O.E. Shtele, Muzej arheologicheskogo dereva v Sviyazhske kak primer sovremennogo muzejnogo kompleksa na territorii ob'ekta Vsemirnogo naslediya YUNESKO. *Heritage and Modernity* 3, 2018, 89–93.

¹⁵ Valeev et al., *Bolgar Historical...*, 11–313.

¹⁶ Valeev et al., *Assumption Cathedral...*, 14.

ment plan¹⁷. The approved documents feature specific requirements and execution periods for participating countries in order to ensure the preservation of their worldwide universal value.

The management plans of both sites provide for the development and support of systems for monitoring and control of the site preservation state, documenting of information, establishment of archives and repositories in which the documents and findings will be collected in the immediate vicinity of the sites, further studies of the archaeological sites and interdisciplinary research with participation of Scientific schools of Russia and foreign countries.

The management plans include further development of museum spaces. The establishment of new museums will redirect tourist flows to the existing museums and sites of Bolgar and Sviyazhsk, as the exhibition sites are not coping with the increased tourist flow on peak attendance days. Some of them feature lines of visitors, such as the Memorable Sign in Bolgar, Trinity Church, and Sviyazhsk museum.

International archaeological field school, established in 2014, has become a special form of conducting scientific meetings in the territory of Bolgar Historical and Archaeological Complex. Over 500 specialists from more than 20 countries participated in its activities in the course of four summer seasons. This format has allowed creating an exceptional scientific space for the study and preservation of cultural heritage in international scientific space and has received wide support among young scientists from different countries. It should be noted that collections of report abstracts are annually published on the basis on conference proceedings¹⁸.

Museums were established in Sviyazhsk and Bolgar following the management plan and the modern practice of organizing museum-reserves, which implies a variety of museum sites along with the entire typology of urban development sites and landscape elements.

In addition, a new transportation, engineering, museum and tourist infrastructure has been created: a wharf for tourist ships, a river station and museum site “Museum of Bolgar Civilization”, a tent camp for pilgrims, Bread Museum, a mosque and madrasah complex, Memorial sign in the honour of the official adop-

¹⁷ P.M. Shulgin, O.E. Shtele, Principy razrabotki i osnovnye polozeniya plana upravleniya dlya rossijsko-go ob”ekta Vsemirnogo naslediya “Bolgarskij istoriko-arheologicheskij kompleks”. *Heritage and Modernity* 1, 2018, 52.

¹⁸ A.G. Sitdikov, (executive editor), *International Archaeological Field School in Bolgar. Proceedings of the Final Conference*. Kazan, 2014; A.G. Sitdikov, (executive editor), *International Archaeological Field School in Bolgar. Proceedings of the Final Conference*. Kazan, 2015; A.G. Sitdikov, (executive editor), *International Archaeological Field School in Bolgar. Proceedings of the Final Conference*. Kazan, 2016; A.G. Sitdikov, (executive editor), *International Archaeological Field School in Bolgar. Proceedings of the Final Conference*. Kazan, 2017; A.G. Sitdikov, (executive editor), *International Archaeological Field School in Bolgar. Proceedings of the Final Conference*. Kazan, 2018.

tion of Islam by Volga Bolgaria in 922; in Sviyazhsk - a wharf for tourist ships, a river station complex combined with a bus station for tourists, a Sviyazhsk history museum, a river museum, and hotels.

At the moment, a critical task in the implementation of the provisions of Bolgar and Sviyazhsk Management Plans is definitely the issue of their legal support. Their integrity will be provided by means of establishment of legislative and regulatory mechanisms for ensuring compliance with the preservation requirements. The solution of this issue requires its consideration and measures taken at both federal and republican levels. The priority task is the legislative consolidation of the status of UNESCO World Cultural and Natural Heritage Sites in the Republic of Tatarstan.

The acknowledgement of cultural heritage as a new strategic factor in the development of the Republic of Tatarstan imposes requirements for the development of the main provisions of this strategy at the republican level. This type of task is set for the first time, and it should become a constituent part of the overall “Strategy of the Socio-Economic Development of the Republic of Tatarstan until 2030”.

A continuous search is underway in the Republic of Tatarstan for new forms of interaction between the society and the state in the field of preservation of historical and cultural sites. Significant results have been achieved in this field over the last 20 years, and cultural heritage has been actively introduced in the context of contemporary life¹⁹.

A concept of cultural integration of the peoples living in the Republic into the world culture, enhancement of the positive image of Tatarstan in Russia and the world by means of promotion of the Republic’s cultural heritage.

The primary goal of the preservation and use of the cultural heritage of the Republic of Tatarstan is the establishment of a competitive policy in this field, which will make the Republic one of the leaders in terms of the forms and results of the use of cultural heritage in the Russian Federation and ensure a high level of inclusion in global cultural projects.

The strategy of preservation and use of the cultural heritage of the Republic of Tatarstan is aimed at the implementation of the following approach: a complex of historical and cultural heritage is a special and very important economic resource of the region, which can and should become the basis for the development of the cultural and tourism spheres in the Republic; at the same time, it can represent a basis for the formation of a unique industry of specialization for historical cities and regions — become one of the promising areas of development of the local economy and stimulation of the development of social infrastructure.

¹⁹ Valeev, *Modernizaciya rossijskogo obshchestva...*, 52.



Fig. 2. Kazan Kremlin. View from the South.



Fig. 3. The eastern section of the fortifications of the Kazan Kremlin. View from the East.



Fig. 4. Kazan Kremlin. Museum complex of the Kazan Khans mausoleums. View from the South-West.



Fig. 5. Plan of the Bolgar medieval city with archaeological excavations.



Fig. 6. The central part of the territory of the Bolgar State Museum-Preserv. View from the South.



Fig. 7. Bolgar State Museum-Reserve. The complex of Large Mosque. View from the South-East.



Fig. 8. Island-town Sviyazhsk. View from the West.



Fig. 9. Sviyazhsk. UNESCO World Heritage Site — Assumption Cathedral and Monastery. View from the South.

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